

THE

# BENNETT PLACE COURIER

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BENNETT PLACE SUPPORT FUND, INC.

Editor: Jeremiah DeGennaro, Historic Interpreter III

Summer 2011

## Reflections on the Sesquicentennial:

*A Dispatch from Charleston*

*A Clearer View:*

While watching from Charleston's Battery, the author attempts to get a better look at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor on the morning of April 12, 2011.

**Jeremiah DeGennaro**

*Historic Interpreter III*

For all the effort that has been expended to plan a commemoration, for all the programs that have been conceived and planned, and for all the talk that has been circulating the past few years, it was not until the night before it began that I realized the gravity of being able to witness and take part in the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War.

My moment of clarity came in Charleston, South Carolina, while standing at the White Point Gardens on the evening of April 11, the night before

Confederate batteries opened fire on Fort Sumter and inaugurated the war. The gardens had been chosen to host a wonderful public program featuring historians, reenactors, and musical selections from the time period. A large crowd had come for this event put on by the City of Charleston, and I found myself standing on the edge trying to get a good view of the stage. While watching the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Spiritual Singers perform a heart-rending version of "Oh, Freedom," I was overcome with the emotion of the moment. My mind went back 150 years to the very moment when the country began to rip itself apart, and I thought of how far we have come since that

moment. To witness a commemoration of the Civil War that included so many different perspectives, and spoke to so many different people, showed me the potential that this commemoration has to be a truly meaningful one.

My part in the sesquicentennial of the firing on Fort Sumter was a small one. I had travelled to Sullivan's Island, SC to take part in the living history program at Fort Moultrie. My Civil War living history group, The Liberty Rifles, were helping to portray members of the 1st South Carolina Militia. It was our opportunity to portray citizens of Charleston enlisting in the new Confederate army and training for military



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DISPATCH FROM CHARLESTON, SC

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service. Our impression gave us the chance to speak with visitors about the attitudes and motivations of volunteers joining the army in the Spring of 1861, and to turn the standard military reenactment format on its ear by portraying soldiers who were in military service, but who had not yet received uniforms, or even weapons. For our part, we tried to recreate the well-documented mischief of these early recruits, performing shoddy drill and bristling under the reins of military authority. By historical standards, our mischief was tame: the antics of actual recruits in the Spring of 1861 led commanders to prohibit all alcohol on Sullivan's Island and tighten control over their soldiers and new recruits. The audience for our living history differed from those who came to the White Point Gardens; by and large these visitors were interested in military history, uniforms and firearms. The National Park Service did an excellent job ensuring that visitors with varying interests would have something to capture their interest.

In many ways, the sesquicentennial commemoration in Charleston highlighted the opportunities and pitfalls that will come with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. The different programs I saw while in Charleston show the myriad ways in which the anniversary can be remembered. The living history programs put on at Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie were quite popular with the public, but the use of the volunteer reenactors can be a double-edged sword, as the interpretation done by some of these volunteers is in desperate need of fact-checking and should be separated from opinions that have to do with modern politics. Alternatively, public programs like the one at White Point Gardens will draw smaller audiences but cover more intellectual territory. In the case of both events, the audience seemed markedly different. How does one square the two? In Charleston it seemed like there was something for everybody, which in my opinion is a good thing, but it did inspire me to try and bridge the existing gap as much as possible in our future programs.

Since coming back from Charleston, I have continued to see some very good and exciting sesquicentennial events, many of them being hosted by groups in our own state. They all prompt me to think on how best to commemorate the Civil War between now and 2015, and how best to reach the many different audiences who are drawn toward these events. Living histories, historical symposiums, and yes, even battle reenactments will help to educate the public about the importance of the Civil War in American history. In Charleston I saw the attempt to blend a bit of all three, with mostly positive results.



A NOTE ON OUR FONTS.

For regular readers of the *Courier*, it may appear that the design and fonts of our newsletter are a bit different from our previous editions. This new look is thanks to a brand new set of 19th-Century fonts recently acquired by the staff, called "*The Printer's Typecase*." This collection of historically documented fonts, borders and ornaments is the product of Mr. Jason Wickersty, who researched and designed the fonts based on original documents from the early and mid-19th Century. For those interested in more information about "*The Printer's Typecase*," please see Mr. Wickersty's website: <http://jrwickerstytypefaces.com>



LIVING  
HISTORY  
PERSPECTIVE

# A STUDY OF 19TH-CENTURY LADIES' UNDERGARMENTS: *Part III: Petticoats*

By  
Diane Smith  
Historic Interpreter I

This article will be devoted to the discussion of the petticoat, since this item can be a bit confusing, as it has many connotations. The importance of the petticoat is second to the corset in that you can't achieve the look of the time without it. Petticoats help give you the soft bell shape required for the proper look of the day. The modern day hoop skirts sold at most sutlers, whether they are 4 or 5 hoops, give you an "A" shape which is not the proper look of the mid-nineteenth century. Petticoats can be worn in layers, and vary in length and materials: Godey's Lady's Book from October 1861 suggests that "...a moderate-sized steel petticoat, and a muslin one — with, of course, a plain one over it — makes a muslin dress look very nicely." As reenactors we have a tendency to call the items we wear a bit differently than the citizens of the mid nineteenth century, so I will try to alleviate some of the confusion:

## *The Steel Petticoat.*

Also known as a crinoline, cage crinoline, or hoop skirt. This lovely invention occurred around the early 1850's in Paris. Made of lightweight steel wires (springs) held with cotton tape, it helped women achieve a round, full look without the multiple layers of heavily starched cotton petticoats. The name "cage crinoline" comes from the look of the item. It resembles a bird cage. I have one and it is a delight to wear and it is very flexible. I've actually driven my small pick up truck while wearing it. I'm sure I raised many eyebrows as people watched me place myself inside my little truck and drive off. This gives you an idea of just how flexible the cage crinoline is. It is also nice in that you can make the circumference as large as you need (i.e. 120" up to 130"). Women's dresses became quite voluminous in the late '50s and early 60's thanks to this invention.



## *The Corded Petticoat.*

This an item which gives you modest fullness with great flexibility. It is usually made from a heavier cotton material. Instead of containing steel wires, also known as springs, it contains rope sewn into the fabric, accounting for the "corded" look of the skirt, as seen in the image at right. There are variations on how many rows of rope you can use. The one I have has 3 sets of 3 rows of rope with about 4" in between each set of rows located only at the bottom. This petticoat is more ideal to have if you are planning on portraying a woman who does work such as laundry or cooking. My petticoat has a circumference of around 70". By adding several layers of cotton petticoats over it, you can achieve a larger circumference. This item may be the most ideal one to have if your budget won't allow you to have both a steel and corded petticoat for your different portrayals.



*The Fabric Petticoat.*

Also known as over the hoop, underskirt, or modesty petticoat. When worn over the hoop (steel or corded) it helps smooth out the lines caused by the wires or rope and also adds some additional fullness. When worn under the hoop, it functions as a modesty item or as an added layer for warm. This item can be made out of cotton, silk or wool. It can be trimmed out at the bottom, ruffled, quilted, plain or fancy (*Crinoline and steel hoops are also frequently ruffled, or at least have all the lower hoops covered with a piece of muslin, as this prevents the shape of the steel showing — Peterson's, May 1862*). If you feel you need to wear a petticoat under your hoop skirt or corded petticoat for modesty, remember if you are wearing your chemise and pantalets they will give you ample coverage. In the warmer weather wearing an additional petticoat may cause you to be very uncomfortable. In the cold weather you may want to consider wearing one especially one that is quilted or made of wool. This will help keep your legs warm.



Petticoats, like the chemise would have been worn for many days before being laundered so it would be heavily starched. You can achieve the heavy starching of the day by using a good deal of spray starch or try making your own starch. Either way, this starching will help the petticoat last longer before needing to be washed. Point to note: if your petticoat gets muddy, wait until the mud dries and then brush it off before laundering. This will help prevent the stain from setting in and will actually help preserve the fabric.

In the previous newsletter, I listed several sources to help you with your impression. Since that time, I have found a few more, which are listed on the right.

As I discover more sources, I will pass them on to you. I hope that you are enjoying reading these articles and they are helpful. In the next newsletter article I will begin discussing the outer garments.



VENDOR INFORMATION

**Needle & Thread Fabrics**

A good source if purchasing the materials you will need to create a cage crinoline. They sell it as a kit.

[www.woodedhamlet.com](http://www.woodedhamlet.com)

**The Dressmaker's Shop**

A great source for period reproduction fabrics. Kimberly is wonderful and very helpful. This site also has patterns and books.

[www.thedressmakersshop.com](http://www.thedressmakersshop.com)

**Past Reflections Reproductions**

Jackie Wakeling and Beth Fausell are the owners and they have extensive knowledge on women's clothing and other items. They also sell patterns as well as provide sewing services.

[www.pastreflectionsreproductions.com](http://www.pastreflectionsreproductions.com)

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# THE SITE MANAGER'S DESK



By John Guss, Bennett Place Site Manager

The gardens are flourishing more than ever before, there is an increase in visitation, and the Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War has begun! Bennett Place continues to look better and better in spite of the continuing doldrums of the world economy. Perhaps the Sesquicentennial has drawn more visi-

tors to Bennett Place in recent months, but I firmly believe it is the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers, and the support of our Bennett Place Support Fund, Inc. that has made all the difference. I am extremely proud of the progress Bennett Place has made over the last four and a half years of my tenure here as site manager.

With the beginning of this historic commemoration, I was privileged enough to be able to travel to Charleston in April for "The Beginning" of the Civil War, but I was extremely disappointed in the city's lack of interest and support for this national tribute. However, I was excited to see our own "Tarheel" reenactment units rush to the call to support such a significant commemoration. The 6<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, other fellow North Carolina units, and even North Carolina State Historic Site employees ventured to Forts Sumter and Moultrie along with other historic landmarks around Charleston even though there was a looming shutdown of our national parks with the tension in Washington. Luckily Congress resolved their differences temporarily and the weekend events were saved.

Even so, with the lackluster and reluctant effort of South Carolina, I, along with a few hundred passionate history enthusiasts, made the early morning jaunt to the Battery overlooking Charleston Harbor where on April 12, 1861 a similar setting of hundreds of American citizens witnessed the spectacle of a fireworks display that unbeknownst to them would lead them to a brutal war, which perhaps many of those onlookers never set eyes on that harbor again. A symbolic mortar shot was fired from the exact point of Fort Johnson at approximately 6:45 a.m. even though the original shot was fired at 4:30 a.m. The scheduling had something to do with "noise ordinances" in the city limits. Ha, Ha. It just goes to show our continuing "sensitive" society. The "War had begun", but there was still another state to secede, North Carolina. So on May 21<sup>st</sup> our fellow historic site, The Old Capitol, put on a very dignified and satisfying recreation of the Secession of the Old North State. The 6<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and other North Carolina units,

and North Carolina State Historic employees once again portrayed these historical events accurately to a rather modest crowd of onlookers.

Finally, our staff had the privilege of being a part of a more regional event of a new celebration and commemoration in the little crossroads of Morrisville (known as Morrisville Station during the Civil War). Two new historical films on the history of the community and the last significant cavalry fighting of the Civil War in North Carolina celebrated the rich history of this town and her people. The following day the citizens witnessed a reenactment of the formation of her sons and fathers into the 6<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Cedar Fork Rifles military unit on the actual ground where these events occurred 150 years before. So, North Carolinians have certainly risen to the occasion in preserving this important part of our American heritage.

This month will mark the true beginning of the fighting with the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Battle of Manassas with the some 10,000 reenactors and more than 100,000 spectators flooding in to the northern Virginia countryside. Once this spectacular event commences the Sesquicentennial will awaken to much more fervor and interest. Let's hope so for our nation's self preservation and awareness of our American heritage.

In addition to the commemoration of the Sesquicentennial, Bennett Place has so much more going on. We continue to enhance our educational programming with an increase in schools and tour groups these past few months. We are also now in the thick of developing our plans for the new museum which we hope to open in April 2013. Lastly, as I mentioned in our previous newsletter, the Bennett Place Support Fund, Inc. is creating an exciting new website which will coincide with our Bennett Place State Historic Site website. This invaluable marketing tool will be an interactive website for visitors to shop, donate, and learn more about Bennett Place, the important people who met here, the significant events which occurred here, and this yeoman Southern family who lived and worked the land that is now a national treasure. The website should be online for viewing by the end of July 2011.

Continue to follow the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Civil War series on our website: <http://www.nccivilwar150.com>, and for those who are most interested in keeping up with the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Civil War throughout the entire country an excellent website to follow is the Civil War Traveler, at [www.civilwartraveler.org](http://www.civilwartraveler.org).

Enjoy this issue of *The Bennett Place Courier*. Thank you again for your continued support.



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: SUMMER INTERN EDITION !

*Jennifer Miller and Robert Pfeiffer*

*Bennett Place has had the benefit of receiving help this summer from two very dedicated and talented students who chose our site for their summer internships. Robert Pfeiffer and Jennifer Miller have been fixtures around the site since the end of May, and have accomplished much in a very short amount of time. As part of our "Thank You" to them for their great work, we are profiling them for this issue's Volunteer Spotlight!*

## **Robert Pfeiffer**

Robert is a Durham native and is currently attending Virginia Tech with a major in History. He is also a very active member of the Corps of Cadets, Virginia Tech's immersive military leadership program. In addition to his workload with school, Robert also serves as regimental historian for the Corps, and will be the administrator of the Corps of Cadets' museum on campus this year. He will be graduating in Spring of 2012, immediately after which he will be commissioning in the Navy with the rank of Ensign. As part of his preparation for a career in the Navy, Robert briefly interrupted his

internship for a three-week cruise aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77), which took him from England to Bahrain. It was hard losing him for that time, but hearing about his trip made up for his absence! In addition to helping with daily guided tours, Robert also played a crucial role during our Memorial Day Timeline event, parlaying his hobby as a Vietnam War reenactor into a living history opportunity. Robert was kind enough to come out in his kit and speak to visitors about the experiences of Marines in Vietnam during 1966-67. His superior firepower definitely stole the show, compared to flintlock muskets and 1861 Springfield!



## **Jennifer Miller**

Jennifer is a graduate student in the Public History program at NC State. Before moving to North Carolina, Jennifer lived in Temecula, California and

earned her B.A. in History from Cal State University San Marcos. Before joining us at Bennett Place, Jennifer did research and volunteer work at Shirley Plantation in Virginia and at our sister site, Historic Stagville in

Durham. Over the summer Jennifer has conducted an impressive amount of research that will ultimately inform the new exhibit renovation slated for April 2013. Jennifer has been researching firsthand accounts of the events surrounding the Bennett Place negotiations, written by soldiers and civilians who were in North Carolina at the time. Her work will help give color and life to the story told in our exhibits. So far a favorite find of hers has been an account written by a Union soldier detailing the ways in which Robert E. Lee's surrender was celebrated, including filling canteens with black powder and igniting them! After her internship, Jennifer will continue working toward her Masters in public history. We hope to see both her and Robert again as they continue their careers.



THANK YOU,  
ROBERT  
AND JENNIFER !!



# JOIN THE CAUSE!

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BENNETT PLACE SUPPORT FUND!



In addition to the satisfaction of supporting the mission of Bennett Place State Historic Site, a donation at the attached contribution levels to our support group are entitled to the following benefits:

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### CONTRIBUTION LEVELS.

- Sergeant (1 yr)      \$25
- Lieutenant (1 yr)      \$50
- Captain (1 yr)      \$100
- Major (3 yrs)      \$300
- Colonel (5 yrs)      \$500
- General (lifetime)      \$1865
- Governor (1 yr)      \$2500
- President (1 yr)      \$5000
- Total:      \$ \_\_\_\_\_



## FOLLOWING THE CIVIL WAR, IN REAL TIME: A LOOK BACK AT THE NEWSPAPERS OF 1861

*One of the most important, reliable and useful resources for historians is the "primary source," documents created at the time of a specific historical event. With this in mind, and as a way of gaining a better understanding of how North Carolina reacted to and was affected by the Civil War, we will be running a special feature throughout the sesquicentennial. In this ongoing feature, we will look back at newspaper articles from the time period, as close as possible to the time of year they were being written. As a quarterly newspaper, we can only be so precise in our dates, but the content provided should give a better understanding of how North Carolinians felt about the war, what they had to deal with on a daily basis, and how that changed over the course of the conflict.*



### JANUARY 1861: Fervor Builds in Wilmington

A secession flag, surrounded by fifteen stars, was raised here to-day. The gathering was large and enthusiastic.

There is a large secession meeting at the theatre to-night. The secession feeling is increasing daily.

—*Evening Journal, Albany, N.Y.*

### MARCH 1861: Reports From N.C. Show Union Support Waning, Even With Former Unionists

A dispatch from Harrisburg, Pa., says the Chief Justice of Vermont recently arrived there from North Carolina. He represents that the Union sentiment prevailed largely two weeks since in North Carolina, but the secession feeling is almost unanimous now. He called at the house of ex-Senator Badger, and found his wife and daughters scraping lint. One of his sons had enlisted. Mr. Badger, until recently, was the leading Union man in North Carolina.

—*New-Hampshire Patriot, Concord, N.H.*

### DECEMBER 1860: Union Meeting in Orange County Sheds Light on Dissent During Secession Crisis

The Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer of the 31st ultimo brings to us a report of the proceedings of "mass meeting" of the citizens of the good old North State, held at Hillsborough on the 22d of December. The proceedings were participated in by the Hon. WILLIAM A. GRAHAM, Ex-Governor SWAIN, and other distinguished citizens of North Carolina.

Mr. Graham, as chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, reported a series expressive of continued attachment to the Union and deprecating secession. We quote from them as follows:

*Resolved*, That we are not insensible to the encouragement given to the hostile feeling of the North against slavery in the Southern States by the result of the late election; but it must not be forgotten that the Government of the United States is a practical Government of but limited powers; that the President is not the sovereign, but the servant of the Republic, with authorities defined and restricted by the Constitution and laws, liable to be checked and restrained within his legitimate powers by Congress and by the Judiciary; that Mr. Lincoln was elected by but a plurality of votes, in consequence of divisions among the conservative voters arrayed against him, the majority against him in the whole popular vote being nearly nine hundred thousand; and when add to this that he will enter into office a majority of both Houses of Congress opposed to him, and will not be able to appoint even his Cabinet counselors without the aid of a conservative Senate, there is but a remote probability of a successful encroachment on our rights during the limited period of his Administration, if there shall be the disposition to attempt it.

*Resolved*, That the enactment of laws in many of the non slaveholding States intended to obstruct the execution of the law of Congress for the arrest and surrender of fugitive slaves is in plain and palpable violation of the Constitution of the United States, and the repeal of those laws is demanded as a duty of justice and submission to the Constitution on the part of those States, and as indispensable to future Union.

*Resolved*, That we recognize in its full extent the right of resistance by

force to unauthorized injustice and oppression, and if the incoming Administration shall pervert the powers of the Government to destroy or otherwise unlawfully interfere with the rights of slavery, none will be more ready than ourselves to recur to this extreme remedy; but, in adopting measures on a subject of such vital interest to fifteen States of the Confederacy, we should deem it but just and wise to act, if possible, in concert, and after consultation with the other slaveholding States; and more especially with the frontier States of Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri, which are the greatest sufferers from existing grievances, and stand as a barrier between the rest of the Southern States and the enemies of their peace and safety beyond that frontier.

*Resolved*, That reasonable time should be allowed and all remedies consistent with the continuance of the Union should be exhausted before an abandonment of that Constitution, established by Washington and his compatriots, which in its general operation has been the source of blessings innumerable to the American people.

JOHN W. NORWOOD, Esq. offered the following amendment to the series:

*Resolved*, That we recommend to the present Legislature to provide for calling a Convention of the people to take into consideration the alarming state of public affairs, and determine for North Carolina the time, mode, and measure of redress for existing wrongs.

Upon this an interesting debate was had, in which Ex-Governor Swain participated, delivering a speech of an hour's length in support of his belief that the Union could and should be preserved. At the close of the discussion Mr. Norwood's amendment was rejected. After which the resolutions reported by Mr. Graham were carried by a large majority.

—*National Intelligencer, Washington, D.C.*



*Special Thanks to Bennett Place Volunteer Jane Hoppenworth for researching and compiling these interesting newspaper articles!*



# UPCOMING EVENTS AT BENNETT PLACE !

## AUGUST 13 - 14

### *Banjos, Books & Brogans*

10 a.m.—4 p.m.

### *6th North Carolina Encampment*

10 a.m.—3 p.m.

Part of the 2nd Saturdays programs. Authors from across the state will be discussing their latest works! The 6th North Carolina State Troops will also be camped around the Bennett Farm. Nationally known banjo artist Joe Ayers will make a special guest appearance, and will play a concert Saturday evening in the theater from 7p.m.-9p.m. Tickets are \$15.00.



## SEPTEMBER 10 - 11

### *Tarheels: Soldiers of the Old North State*

Saturday, 10 a.m.—4 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.—3 p.m.

The North State Rifles living history group will be camped at the Bennett Farm, demonstrating what life was like for North Carolina soldiers on campaign during the American Civil War. Firing demonstrations, drill maneuvers, talks and cooking demonstrations will be ongoing throughout the weekend.

## OCTOBER 8 - 9

150th Signature Event:

# THE ROAD TO SECESSION

Saturday, 10 a.m.—4 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.—3 p.m.

Join us for the Road to Secession, and view the sights and sounds of the beginning of the Civil War. Civilians and soldiers will be encamped on the Bennett Farm forming a new company of the 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, the Orange Guards. Robert Szabo will demonstrate 19<sup>th</sup> Century photography, The Huckleberry Brothers will play through the weekend, and Ronald Hudson will be providing wagon rides. We will also have a 19<sup>th</sup> century baseball game featuring the Greensboro Patriots! Authors and historians will also be on hand sharing the stories and history of the beginnings of one of the most epic events in American history.

